

Russell A. Oakley (1880–1931)

Russell A. Oakley was born in Kansas and graduated from [Kansas Agricultural College](#) in 1903. He received his PhD from Iowa State College in 1920, having already joined the USDA's [Division of Agrostology](#) in 1903 as a scientific aid. By 1913 he had become agronomist in charge of seed distribution.¹



Beginning in 1906, Oakley and USDA colleague [Dr. Charles V. Piper](#) began to be approached by members of the U.S. golf community for advice on problems with turfgrass at U.S. golf courses. Piper and Oakley undertook an investigation of these problems, and in 1913 they began to publish a series of articles on turfgrass, to the great interest of the golf community.² In 1915, the Executive Committee of the [U.S. Golf Association \(USGA\)](#) met with then Secretary of Agriculture [David F. Houston](#) to request help from the USDA with the turfgrass problems their member clubs were encountering. Secretary Houston agreed, and the [Arlington Turf Garden](#) was established at the USDA's Arlington Experimental Farm in Arlington, Virginia.³

At the Arlington Turf Garden, the USDA conducted research on turfgrass diseases and fertilizers and on the selection and propagation of grasses best suited for golf turf.⁴ In 1917, Piper and Oakley published their most influential work on this topic, [Turf for Golf Courses](#).

In 1920, when the U.S. Golf Association established its office known as the "[Green Section](#)," Piper became its chairman and Oakley became co-chairman.⁵

After the death of Piper in 1926, Oakley was promoted to Piper's position as senior agrostologist with the USDA Division of Forage Plants, and he also became chairman of the Green Section.⁶

For more on Russell A. Oakley

<http://gsr.lib.msu.edu/1930s/1931/3109175.pdf>

¹ K. F. Kellerman, "Russell A. Oakley," *The Bulletin of the United States Golf Association Green Section* (September 1931): 175.

² John Montieth, Jr., "The Arlington Turf Garden," *The Bulletin of the United States Golf Association Green Section* 8:12 (December 1928): 244.

³ Ibid, 245.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ James T. Snow, "The Turf Advisory Service, Part One" *Green Section Record* (May-June 2003): 6.

⁶ Kellerman, 175.